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Abraham Lincoln's Ancestry



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ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S ANCESTRY

An Address

Delivered before the Sixth Annual Indiana History Conference
In Indianapolis, Friday Evening, December 5, 1924.

By William E. Barton, Litt. D., LL. D.

Author of "*The Life of Abraham Lincoln*," "*The Soul of Abraham Lincoln*," "*The Paternity of Abraham Lincoln*," etc.

Ordinary men and events call for little explanation. We are sufficiently familiar with common men and common things to accept them without much attempt to explain them. In this we do indeed wrong ourselves, but like Peter Bell, we get on with less mental disturbance by reason of the convenience of thus disposing of what has become familiar:

"A primrose by the river's brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more."

With equally facile and final classifications, presumably, he disposed of his neighbors, as men possessed of so many acres and so many cattle and swine. A sunrise or a creation of the world, if it happen a second time in their experience, is to most men a thing to be accepted without much interruption of ordinary business. But now and then occurs an unusual event or a man out of the ordinary, and then we are compelled to stop and think. That is an uncomfortable process, to which most people are but little addicted.

The world and his wife have only about three ways of accounting for great men. The first is to deny or ignore the fact of greatness. The second is to consider it as the effect of some sinister influence. The third is to appeal to the supernatural.

When Paul landed at Malta and a snake encircled his wrist, the native people of the island at first thought him a murderer, but as he did not fall down dead they said he was a God. Within two or three days, probably, after they had seen Paul

walking the streets like other men, they were inclined to think that there had really been nothing unusual about the event.

Abraham Lincoln has not escaped any of these three kinds of explanation. His fame has been subject to deification, vilification, and an attempt to explain away all that was most significant in his career as the effect of fortunate conditions surrounding his rise to fame, together with the alleged yet more fortunate circumstances of his death which lent themselves to an overestimate of a really commonplace man. In my judgment no one of these processes accounts for Abraham Lincoln. We are not attempting tonight to account for him, except as a brief study of his antecedents may have its place in such an accounting.

Heredity does not explain any man. Environment and personality are still to be reckoned with. But heredity has its place, and it is an important place in the determination of character. In the case of Lincoln, it is far from being an unworked field. Almost every biographer has expended more or less energy upon it. But none of them, nor all of them together, have given us a final result. We are endeavoring tonight to make some contribution toward the world's knowledge of Lincoln's heredity.

There is the more occasion to do this because, in the direct line of his paternal ancestry, we have now assured results within certain limits, and as to his maternal line, we know at least some things that have been confidently believed and which are no longer to be relied upon. I am proposing tonight five summaries of investigations:

- I. The English Ancestry of the American Lincolns.
- II. The New England Ancestry of Abraham Lincoln.
- III. Lincoln's Pioneer Ancestry in Kentucky.
- IV. The Maternal Line of Abraham Lincoln.
- V. Lincoln's Lost Grandmother.

These cover the main lines of interest, and all that in this hour we have time to consider.

I. THE ENGLISH ANCESTRY OF THE AMERICAN LINCOLNS

The name Lincoln is first a place name, and then, by derivation, a family name. It goes back to the days of Roman occupation, and shares with Cologne on the Rhine the honor of being one of the two names that preserve the Latin abbrevia-

tion for "colonia," or colony. "Lindcolonia" by successive abbreviations became Lincoln; the silent letter "l" is reminiscent of this derivation. The family of Lincoln presumably began in the county of Lincoln in England but that is too far remote for any accurate knowledge.

There is some reason to believe that the American Lincolns are descended from those of that name who, in the 17th century, lived in Hingham, England; and in the faith that this was true, a bust of Abraham Lincoln was dedicated in the old church in that English village as the World War was drawing to a close. The question upon which the connection depends is, Was Samuel Lincoln, who came to New England in 1637, sailing from Yarmouth April 8, arriving in Boston June 20, and after a brief residence with his employer Francis Lawes in Salem, making his home in Hingham, Massachusetts, the same Samuel, son of Edward, who was baptized in Hingham in old England, Sunday, August 24, 1622? If so, he would have been fifteen years of age when he reached New England, assuming that he was baptized within a few days after his birth. But Samuel Lincoln, who came over with Francis Lawes in 1637, gave his age as nineteen, and when he died in 1690 his age was given as seventy-one. We cannot very well believe that his baptism was postponed four years, for it was the custom of his father, Edward Lincoln, to appear at somewhat regular intervals at the old Hingham church with a baby for baptism, and he did so appear on March 28, 1619, with a son Daniel. This practically forbids our believing that Samuel was born in that same year.

There is, of course, one possibility that must be reckoned with. Samuel Lincoln, being only fifteen, but apprenticed to an employer who wanted to take him to America and himself greatly desiring to go, may have marked his age up a matter of four years in fear lest his youth should cause his refusal, or in desire that he might earlier reach his majority in the freedom of the new world. Our first impulse is to believe that this is the case: for there is considerable reason to believe that the Lincolns of Hingham in the new world came from Hingham in the old world.* However, it is but fair to say

* Lea and Hutchinson, in their *"Ancestry of Lincoln,"* have accepted and made popular the theory of the rise of the Lincoln family in Hingham, in England, and it is on their authority that the bust was erected in 1919. Waldo Lincoln in his new *"History of the Lincoln Family"* is skeptical about it. I should be glad to believe Lea and Hutchinson right in this particular; I have found them wrong in so many other matters.

that we are not at liberty to dispose of this question on the simple assumption that a young man, eager for his freedom, told a white lie about his age and thereby earlier terminated his apprenticeship. The question is one that involves a considerable complication, too intricate for our present consideration in detail. The sum of our conclusion up to date is this, that while there is much reason to believe that the first American ancestor of the Lincolns came from Hingham in old England, the attempt to identify him as the son of Edward Lincoln is not as yet successful. It is rather fortunate for the parish church in that old city that it got its bust of Lincoln and a very considerable American cash contribution for its work before the investigation went any further than it had gone at the date of the gift. It is possible that more thorough search may establish this line of descent, which now may be termed possible but not established. But, all uncertainty aside, there can be no doubt that Samuel, the progenitor of the American Lincolns, sprang from this common stock. The family is of pure English descent, and probably from old Hingham.

II. THE NEW ENGLAND ANCESTRY OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

When Abraham Lincoln wrote his autobiographical sketch for Jesse W. Fell, in December, 1859, he said concerning his ancestors of the name of Lincoln:

"An effort to identify them with the New England family of the same name ended in nothing more definite than a similarity of Christian names in both families, such as Enoch, Levi, Mordecai, Solomon, Abraham, and the like."

Subsequent and more thorough investigation, however, made the identification complete. The Lincolns are of New England origin.*

* Waldo Lincoln's "*History of the Lincoln Family*," Worcester, Mass., 1923, will stand, I judge, as the authoritative record of the Lincolns in America. Marion Dexter Learned's "*Abraham Lincoln, an American Migration*," Philadelphia, 1909, written to disprove the thesis of Louis P. Henninghausen that the Lincolns were of German origin, clearly makes that point and in addition gives a good account of the Lincolns in America. Lea & Hutchinson, in their "*Ancestry of Abraham Lincoln*," appear to have done good work in the English ancestry of the Lincoln family, but not to have established its connection with the family in America; and in their American line I have found them so often in error that I no longer trust them in any matter where documentary proof is not available. I trusted them to my sorrow, and now the best that I can say is that they are not always wrong.

Not only are the American Lincolns of New England extraction, but the family in colonial times was almost wholly restricted to Massachusetts. The Adjutant General of the United States Army has searched the records of the War Department and finds not a single Revolutionary soldier of the name of Lincoln from Virginia or the states farther south. The United States records show soldiers of the name of Lincoln, Linkhorn and Linkon as follows: Maryland 1, Pennsylvania 4, New York 1, Rhode Island 1, New Hampshire 7, Connecticut 10 and Massachusetts 44.

These records, of course, are incomplete. A search of the records of particular states, including the enrollments of militia which may duplicate names, increases the preponderance of Massachusetts. Mr. Charles Z. Lincoln, in an address at Taunton, Massachusetts, July 12, 1906, stated that he had made careful search among the state records, and had found one Revolutionary soldier named Lincoln from New York, one from Pennsylvania, and three from New Jersey—only six outside of New England, and only fourteen from New England states other than Massachusetts, while Massachusetts showed on her various muster rolls not less than 335 men named Lincoln.

The misspelling "Linkhorn" and the frontier variants are of no significance as concerns nationality or family lineage. James M. Lincoln of Wareham, Mass., in a newspaper article published and copied in various papers in New England in 1910, and bearing date of May 30 in that year, said that he had found in early Massachusetts documents the following variance in the spelling of the name Lincoln:

Linkon, Linkhorn, Lincol, Linclon, Lincorn, Linkoln, Linkclon, Linkord, Linkhoom, Lincon, Linclin, Lancoln, Lincham, Lincolen, Linkhon, Linkton, Lincolan, Linchorney, Linckhorn, Lenks, Linchorn, Lincoln, Linkalon, Linklon, Linclin, Lincolon, Linculor, Linkhoren, Lincott, Linckhorney, Lincornew, Lynklyn, Linckoneal and Lincoln.

If they do such things in the green tree, what may be expected in the dry? If Massachusetts thus misspelled the name of one of her best colonial families, the name of one of her Revolutionary Generals, of two Governors and of many judges and members of her Legislature, it can be little wonder that on the frontier the name was occasionally misspelled.

We are now able to trace the descent of President Lincoln

with rather remarkable precision from Hingham to Hodgenville, from pioneer Massachusetts to pioneer Kentucky. This we do in seven generations.

1. Samuel Lincoln of Hingham, Mass. (1619-1690)

Whatever uncertainty attaches to the English lineage, the first American ancestor of Abraham Lincoln, in the male line, was Samuel Lincoln. He was born in England, apprenticed as a weaver, and came to Salem, Massachusetts, April 18, 1637. He died in Hingham, Massachusetts, May 26, 1690, aged seventy-one. He married in America, before 1650, Martha, whose surname is unknown. She died April 10, 1693.

2. Mordecai Lincoln of Scituate (1657-1727)

Samuel and Martha Lincoln became the parents of eleven children, of whom eight survived them. Their fourth child, Mordecai, was born at Hingham, Massachusetts, June 14, 1657, and died in Scituate, Massachusetts, November 8, 1727, aged 70. Mordecai Lincoln was an iron founder. He married Sarah Jones, daughter of Abraham Jones of Hull. She died before February 17, 1701-2, on which date he took a second wife. It is probably through Sarah's father that the name Abraham became prominent in the Lincoln family.

3. Mordecai Lincoln of New Jersey and Pennsylvania (1686-1736)

The eldest son of Mordecai Lincoln and his wife Sarah Jones was Mordecai Lincoln, who was born in Hingham, Massachusetts, April 24, 1686, and removed before 1710 to Monmouth County, New Jersey. Like his father, he was an iron founder. He married before 1714, Hannah, daughter of Richard and Sarah (Bowne) Salter of Freehold, New Jersey. He died in Berkes County, Pennsylvania, May 12, 1736.

4. John Lincoln of Virginia (1716-1788)

The eldest son of Mordecai and Hannah was John Lincoln, born May 3, 1716. He was a weaver, and lived in Caernarvon, Lancaster County, and subsequently in Berkes County, Pennsylvania. He removed to Virginia about 1768. On July 5, 1743, he married Mrs. Rebecca (Flowers) Morris. Genealogists call him "Virginia John," probably to distinguish

him from his nephew John of Uniontown, Pennsylvania. His Virginia home was in the Shenandoah Valley, in that part of Augusta County which is now Rockingham County, a few miles north of the present town of Harrisonburg. President Lincoln believed that his great-grandfather, John, was a Quaker. This belief was based upon a "vague tradition." In such investigation as I have been able to make, I do not find this tradition confirmed, or that there were any Lincolns who were Quakers, excepting as members of the Lincoln family now and then intermarried with Quakers, none of them in direct line of Abraham Lincoln. John Lincoln was about 57 years of age when he removed to Virginia. He and his wife Rebecca made deeds on August 7, 1773. The precise years of their death have but recently been discovered; John died in November, 1788, in Linville Creek, Virginia, and is there buried. His will was probated June 22, 1789. His widow, Rebecca, died July 20, 1806.

5. Abraham Lincoln, the Kentucky Pioneer (1744-1786)

The eldest son of John and Rebecca Lincoln was Abraham Lincoln, the Kentucky pioneer, grandfather of the President. He was born in Berkes County, Pennsylvania, May 13, 1744. As a young man he accompanied his father to Virginia, and from him, August 12, 1773, obtained a grant of 20 acres of land on Linville Creek, in Augusta, now Rockingham County. He was a Captain of Virginia Militia during the Revolution, but it is uncertain if he saw active military service in that war. Of him and his wife more will need to be said. For the present we may record that he was licensed to marry, January 9, 1770; that he removed to Kentucky in 1782, and that he was killed by Indians in May, 1786.

6. Thomas Lincoln (1778-1851)

The children of Abraham and Bathsheba (Herring) Lincoln were:

(1) Mordecai Lincoln, born about 1771. He married Mary, daughter of Luke Mudd, and the certificate of their marriage is at Bardstown, Kentucky. They were married by a Roman Catholic priest, and a considerable number of their descendants have been and are of that faith. They had three sons, Abraham, James and Mordecai, and three daughters, Elizabeth, Mary Rowena and Martha. Mordecai the father served

as sheriff of Washington County, and it is said that he was a member of the Legislature, but this is not true. He removed to Illinois, and died in 1830.

(2) Josiah Lincoln, born about 1772. The name of his wife appears as Catherine in deed to John Kelly, October 5, 1811. From Kentucky he moved to Indiana, and died in 1836, leaving two sons, Thomas Lincoln of Milltown, Indiana, and Jacob, who moved to Missouri, and four daughters.

(3) Mary Lincoln, born 1775 or 1776, married Ralph Crume of Nelson County, Kentucky.

(4) Thomas Lincoln, born January 6, 1778. This accords with the date upon his tombstone. The date given by Lea and Hutchinson, and that upon the walls of the Lincoln Memorial at Hodgenville, are incorrect. He married Nancy Hanks, June 12, 1806. They became the parents of Sarah, Abraham and Thomas. The last named died in infancy; the first lived to young womanhood, married and died at the birth of her first child. The second child of Thomas and Nancy Lincoln was Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States.

(5) Nancy Lincoln, born March 25, 1780, married William Brumfield of Washington County, Kentucky.

7. Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865)

This outline brings us in seven generations from Hingham, Massachusetts, where the first American Lincoln made a permanent home in 1637 to the cabin in which, 172 years later, the future President was born.

Of the seven Lincolns in direct line from the original immigrant Samuel to Abraham the President, not one died in the house in which he was born nor yet in the same town, and only one of them died in the same State.

1. SAMUEL LINCOLN was born in England, probably in Hingham, in 1619, and died in 1690 in Hingham, Massachusetts.

2. MORDECAI LINCOLN was born in Hingham, Massachusetts, in 1657 and died in Scituate, Massachusetts, in 1727.

3. MORDECAI LINCOLN was born in Hingham or Scituate, Massachusetts, and after a residence in New Jersey died in Berkes County, Pennsylvania, in 1736.

4. JOHN LINCOLN was born in Berkes County, Pennsylvania, in 1716, and died in Virginia in 1788.

5. ABRAHAM LINCOLN was born in Virginia in 1744 and died in Kentucky in 1786.

6. THOMAS LINCOLN was born in Virginia in 1778 and died in Illinois in 1851.

7. ABRAHAM LINCOLN was born in Kentucky in 1809 and died in Washington in 1865.

They were landowners, but land was cheap. As a rule they left each settlement when it was beginning to prosper, being animated by the urge of the pioneer.

They were respectable people, nearly all of them with some little education, but there were no illustrious ones except Abraham Lincoln.

The first American ancestor of this democratic family came to the colonies an indentured servant or apprentice.

There was nothing disgraceful in this ancestry in any generation, neither was there any special occasion of pride.

We find no evidence that any member of this family was a Quaker. In Virginia the family were Baptists, and this was the church of the parents of the President.

III. LINCOLN'S PIONEER ANCESTOR IN KENTUCKY

Abraham Lincoln, grandfather of the President, and the ancestor for whom the President was named, was born in Pennsylvania, May 13, 1744. As a young man he accompanied his father, John Lincoln, to Virginia. They made their home in the fertile Shenandoah Valley, having a large tract of land on Linville Creek. He had a grant of 210 acres of land from his father, August 12, 1773. It would seem that he might well have held it in possession. The amount for which he sold it seemed large, five thousand pounds of Virginia money, but that currency was so depreciated in 1780 that its value was very little except to buy more land, which is what he did. After a preliminary visit to Kentucky in 1780, he removed with his family to that new state, and there was killed by an Indian. Of his marriage and the identity of his wife, mention will be made later.

Captain Abraham Lincoln was killed by an Indian at a date which Nicolay and Hay, with other biographers give as 1784. This is the date furnished by President Lincoln. Other writers have given it as "soon after 1780" and at varying dates as late as 1788. We have proof that he was alive on May 7,

1785, when he served as marker for a survey on his land on Long Run of Floyd's Fork in Jefferson County, Kentucky. Administration on his estate was granted in Nelson County, October 14, 1788. The inventory of his estate is dated March 10, 1789, and his personal property amounted to L 68, 16s, and 6d. The true date I found must have been in the spring of 1786; and Reverend Louis A. Warren, by a wholly independent investigation, established the same year and found the month to have been May.

Further investigation by the writer in company with Hon. R. C. Ballard Thruston of the Filson Club of Louisville, and Reverend Louis A. Warren, has resulted in the discovery of the site of the original Lincoln Kentucky home, on Long Run of Floyd's Fork in Jefferson County. Also we have found a considerable body of local tradition, which the records of the Long Run Church tend to confirm, as to the probable situation of the grave of the pioneer Captain, Abraham Lincoln. That he was buried upon his own farm appears almost certain, and that the land now within the enclosure of the Long Run Baptist Church, located on that farm, was the community burying ground from the beginning of the settlement, appears equally certain. The church was organized in 1797, but the place was used for worship at a date still earlier. The tradition, which is unusually clear and consistent, is to the effect that a group of the oldest graves, five at least in number, were covered by the brick church edifice on its enlargement in 1860 and that one of these was the grave of Captain Lincoln. It is rather more than probable that the brick building still in use as a place of regular worship by the Long Run Church covers the mortal remains of Captain Abraham Lincoln.

One other interesting and highly important document may be cited here in complete proof of the location of the home of the pioneer Abraham Lincoln, and the place of his residence at the time of his death. It is a subscription list, dated September 18, 1786, signed by Bland W. Ballard, Morgan Hughes and the other neighbors in the vicinity of Long Run, to arm and equip an expedition against the Indians, the expedition to be commanded by George Rogers Clark. Most of the subscriptions are in kind, horses, cows, blankets and provisions. Halfway down the list is a gun appraised at eight pounds, the gift of "the Widow Lincoln!" This document is in the

library of the University of Chicago, and it adds the last essential argument to the proof already cited. We now know where the Lincolns made their first home on the western side of the mountains, and where the tragedy occurred which President Lincoln was accustomed to say impressed him more than any tale he heard during his boyhood. The widow Lincoln did not remove to Washington County, where she had relatives, until she had harvested the pathetic crop which her husband was sowing when he was killed; she was still living on Long Run in September, 1786.

An old road order dated July 15, 1791, in Nelson County records, because Washington had not then been created out of Nelson, describes the road to the Beech Fork in what is now Washington County as running "down the branch on which the Widow Lincoln lives." In the autumn of 1786 she was well known on Long Run as the Widow Lincoln, and in the summer of 1791 she had been long enough domiciled on a tributary of the Beech Fork to be known and named in an official description of the highway as Widow Lincoln. Apparently she removed from Jefferson to Washington County within a few months after the murder of her husband.

Under a subsequent heading I have undertaken to discover Abraham Lincoln's lost grandmother. But this may be a good place to discover the other one. Her name is alleged to have been Mary Shipley, and this is a mistake.

Abraham Lincoln, grandfather of the President, was given a license to marry, in Augusta County, Virginia, June 7, 1770. Unfortunately, the bride's name is not of record. But Mary Shipley appears not to have existed as the wife of any ancestor of Abraham Lincoln.

The discovery that Bathsheba Herring was the wife of Abraham Lincoln the pioneer, June 17, 1780, and September 8, 1781, was first published by John T. Harris, Jr., of Harrisonburg, Virginia, in an open letter to the *Century Magazine*, for March, 1887 (pp. 810-811). It was adopted by Professor Marion Dexter Learned and also by Lea and Hutchinson as affording indubitable evidence that the pioneer Abraham Lincoln was twice married, and they assumed that Bathsheba was his second wife, his first being Mary Shipley. Others, of whom the foremost was Waldo Lincoln, relying upon the oral tradition that the pioneer left a widow, whose name was believed to have been Mary, held that there were

indeed two marriages of Abraham Lincoln, one to Mary Shipley and the other to Bathsheba Herring, but that the order was reversed; that Bathsheba, ill ever since the birth of her last child, died as her husband was about to remove to Kentucky, and that he, needing a mother for his family of small children, quickly married Mary Shipley.

In the summer of 1922, during a search for material for the present writer, a large quantity of old papers discovered in the basement of the old Capitol in Frankfort, Kentucky, and ordered destroyed, were saved through the intercession of Mrs. Cannon, Secretary of the Kentucky State Historical Society. Among other documents was found a tax list of Washington County for 1792, and there appeared the name of Bathsheba Lincoln. She was assessed on the same day and next in order to Mordecai Lincoln, and the land stood in his name, as did one of the horses; but another horse and ten cattle were listed as hers. Hers also was a son above sixteen and under twenty-one, who must have been Josiah, for Thomas was not then sixteen.

The lists for 1793 have not been discovered, but the same body of material contains the list of 1794. Therein Bathsheba still is taxed for one horse and ten cattle. She is recorded as having two sons above sixteen and under twenty-one, who can be no other than Josiah and Thomas. Thomas, who first appears of record under his own name as over sixteen in 1795, and appears again in that class in 1796, and disappears in 1797 and 1798, when he must have been in Tennessee, reappears as above twenty-one in 1799. This gives us one more record of Bathsheba, and narrows down by a year at either end the birthyear of Thomas Lincoln. He was above sixteen in 1794 and above twenty-one in 1799; these dates with those that appear elsewhere confirm the year of his birth already arrived at, as 1778. Bathsheba was still living on Beech Fork, Washington County, and apparently with her eldest son Mordecai, until after February 3, 1801, when she signed her authorization for the marriage of her daughter Nancy or Ann to William Brumfield; Mordecai signing the bond with the prospective bridegroom. Not long afterward she removed to Hardin County to live with her daughter Nancy.

These discoveries completely revolutionize all theories hitherto held concerning the alleged two marriages of the pioneer Abraham Lincoln. No vestige of proof has been

found of the existence of Mary Shipley, and we have abundant proof of Bathsheba as the wife and the widow of Abraham Lincoln, the pioneer. She was, so far as we have any reason to believe, his one and only wife, the mother of all his children. She became his bride in 1770, and signed documents as his wife in 1780 and 1782. She was the "Widow Lincoln" who contributed a gun to fight the Indians who had killed her husband, who wept above his grave and undertook the care of his five children. She it was whom the grandchildren, both those in Kentucky and those in Illinois remembered as living to a great age, and whom the latter recalled as "Granny Basheby." She has now her proper place in the Lincoln family. We have found one of Abraham Lincoln's lost grandmothers, and we have before us another and even more interesting quest for the other one.

IV. LINCOLN'S MATERNAL LINE

Nancy Hanks, the mother of Abraham Lincoln, was born in Virginia. The date of her birth is given as February 4, 1784, but I find no authority for any date. She died in Indiana, October 5, 1818.

Concerning her ancestry, much has been written, the greater part of it being unreliable. She was reared in the family of her maternal aunt, Betsy, who married Thomas Sparrow. She was called by their name. They removed to Indiana and lived near her, died at the same time and were buried with her. Family traditions concerning her are not based on written records and are confused by reason of overlapping generations and a marked tendency to the duplication of names.

Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks were married in the home of Richard Berry, in the settlement called Beechland, near Springfield, Washington County, Kentucky. The date of the marriage was June 12, 1806. The marriage bond was dated June 10 and was signed by Thomas Lincoln and Richard Berry and witnessed by the County Clerk, John H. Parrott.*

Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks were married by Reverend Jesse Head, a deacon of the Methodist Episcopal

* An affidavit of Dr. Christopher Columbus Graham in his one hundredth year, claiming to have been present at the infare of Thomas and Nancy Lincoln, states that this was in the home of her guardian, John H. Parrott. The man who signed this marriage bond as Nancy's "gardin" was the younger Richard Berry. John H. Parrott signed in his official capacity as County Clerk.

Church. Mr. Head lived for many years at Springfield, where he was a local preacher, a Justice of the Peace, and a cabinet maker. His marriage returns were made annually or thereabout, and several of them are still preserved in the old records of Washington County.* The Hanks family, however, had no residence in Washington County.

Nancy Hanks was about 23 when she married Thomas Lincoln. Reared by her aunt and uncle, Thomas and Elizabeth Sparrow, she was taught to read and write—an accomplishment which her mother possessed, but rare in the Hanks family, and one of which the earlier Sparrows were guiltless. She was above the usual height, slender, and weighed about 130 pounds. She was a brunette. Her hair was dark brown, almost black, and her skin was dark. Her eyes were small and gray. She had a prominent forehead, which was remarked by her relatives and regarded by them as an indication of superior mental ability. Her face was thin, sharp and angular. Her disposition was cheerful, and she had an exuberant spirit which now and then broke forth in care-free merriment; but this mood alternated with one of melancholy; and all who remembered her spoke of the habitual sadness of her features in repose. She was amiable, friendly and kind. She was gentle, capable and strong. Tall and slender, she early showed an inclination to stoop and seemed to have a tendency toward consumption. Like her husband, she was a Baptist. The record of their Kentucky church membership has not been found; and the Little Pigeon Church in Indiana was not organized when she died; but when her husband united with that church, he did not unite "by experience" but by letter. They doubtless were members of the same church in Kentucky.

Lincoln was aware of the cloud that shadowed his mother's birth, and did not often speak of her; but all his references were both respectful and affectionate.

In 1851, Thomas Lincoln died; and his son Abraham Lincoln broke over his habitual reserve and spoke somewhat freely to Herndon of his father and also of his mother.

"Mr. Lincoln himself said to me in 1851, on receiving news of his father's death," wrote Herndon, "that whatever might

* For information concerning Jesse Head I am indebted to Hon. Joseph Polin, of Springfield, Kentucky; Miss Mary A. Stephenson, of Harrodsburg, Kentucky; and Hon. L. S. Pence, of Lebanon, Kentucky. Mr. Pence has printed the results of his inquiry in a series of articles in the *Lebanon, Kentucky, Enterprise*, beginning March 11, 1921.

be said of his parents, and however unpromising the early surroundings of his mother may have been, she was highly intellectual by nature, had a strong memory, acute judgment, and was cool and heroic.”*

Had she lived we cannot doubt she would have been a potent influence for good upon his youth and manhood. High were the qualities which he believed himself to have inherited from her; and he was justified in saying, “God bless my mother; all that I am or hope to be I owe to her.”

While the researches of recent years have steadily tended to clarify the uncertainties relating to Abraham Lincoln’s paternal ancestry, the world knows less about his maternal line than it knew twenty-five years ago, and most of the books that have been published on the subject have added to the confusion.

In 1899, Mrs. Caroline Hanks Hitchcock published a little book entitled “Nancy Hanks.” It has generally been accepted by historians and biographers of Lincoln, and is the basis of the maternal line as accepted by Lea and Hutchinson in their “Ancestry of Lincoln.” But it fails in these particulars:

(a) It does not establish a connection between the English and American families of the name of Hanks.

(b) It fails in its attempt to establish a connection between the Hanks family of Massachusetts, from which Mrs. Hitchcock was herself descended, and the Hanks family of Virginia.

(c) It fails to establish a connection between the Hanks family in Virginia and that in Kentucky.

(d) It fails in its effort to establish a relationship between the Hanks family in Kentucky and the mother of the President.

One very important document Mrs. Hitchcock cites, the will of Joseph Hanks, of Nelson County, Kentucky, executed January 8, and probated May 14, 1793. This names five sons and three daughters. The last named, and presumably the youngest, of these three named daughters was Nancy. Mrs. Hitchcock assumed, without proof, that this Nancy was the mother of the President.

The will of Joseph Hanks follows, copied direct from the original, which is on file at Bardstown.

* Herndon’s Lincoln, 1st Ed. 1, p. 13.

WILL OF JOSEPH HANKS

In the Name of God Amen, I Joseph Hanks of Nelson County State of Kentucky being of sound Mind and Memory, but weak in body and calling to Mind the frailty of all Human Nature do make and Devise this my last Will and Testament in the Manner and Form following To Wit

Item I Give and bequeath unto my Son Thomas one Sorrel Horse called Major.

Item I Give and bequeath unto my Son Joshua one Grey Mare called Bonney.

Item I Give and bequeath unto my Son William one Grey Horse called Gilbert.

Item I Give and bequeath unto my Son Charles one Roan Horse called Dove.

Item I Give and bequeath unto my Son Joseph one Sorrel Horse called Bald. Also the Land whereon I now live containing one hundred and fifty acres.

Item I Give and bequeath unto my Daughter Elizabeth one Heifer Yearling called Gentle.

Item I Give and bequeath unto my Daughter Polly one Heifer Yearling called Lady.

Item I Give and bequeath unto my Daughter Nancy one Heifer Yearling called Peidy.

Item I Give and bequeath unto my Wife Nancy all and Singular my whole Estate during her life, afterwards to be equally divided between all my Children. It is my Will and Desire that the whole of the Property above bequeathed should be the property of my Wife during her Life. And lastly I constitute ordain and appoint my Wife Nanny and my Son William as Executrix and Executor to this my last Will and Testament.

Signed Sealed and Delivered
in Presence of Us this eighth
day January one thousand seven
hundred and ninety three.

Joseph x Hanks
his
mark

Isaac Lansdale
John Davis
Peter Atherton

(Seal)

At a Court begun and held for Nelson County on Tuesday the fourteenth day of May 1793.

This last Will and Testament of Joseph Hanks decd was produced in Court and sworn to by William Hanks one of the Executors therein named and was proved by the Oaths of Isaac Lansdale and John Davis subscribing witnesses thereto and Ordered to be Recorded.

Teste

Ben Grayson Co. Ck.

Mrs. Hitchcock assumed without any known valid proof that the Nancy Hanks named as a daughter in the will of Joseph Hanks was the mother of the President. It was difficult to hold this theory in face of the fact that there already was a Nancy Hanks of that generation, the mother, before marriage of Dennis Hanks, and subsequently wife of Levi Hall, and by him mother of a family of children who knew themselves as half-brothers and half-sisters of Dennis Hanks. But this difficulty was met by reading Dennis out of the Hanks family; by providing him a mother, made to order, one Nancy Sparrow, alleged daughter of Thomas Sparrow (who in reality had no children) and a mythical daughter, among a group of mythical daughters, of Robert Shipley. Into this maze of conjecture and misinformation we need not at present go, but we may pause long enough to refute it.

The simple question involved is, was Nancy Hanks, the President's mother, the daughter or the granddaughter of Joseph Hanks, who died in Nelson County, Kentucky, in 1793?

Abraham Lincoln answered this question without knowing that it was ever to rise. In the campaign biography which he wrote in 1860 for John Locke Scripps, which is preserved in manuscript in the library of Congress, he told of his flat-boat journey to New Orleans in 1831, and of John Hanks as one of his associates. He said:

"He is the same John Hanks who now engineers the 'rail enterprise' at Decatur, and is a first cousin of Abraham's mother."

John Hanks was born at the Falls of Rough in Grayson County, Kentucky, February 9, 1802, and died July 12, 1890. He was the son of William and Elizabeth (Hall) Hanks, and the grandson of Joseph and Nancy Hanks. If the President's mother had been a daughter of Joseph Hanks, she would have

been, not John Hanks' first cousin, but his aunt. We have other proof in abundance, but for our present purpose the testimony of Abraham Lincoln will suffice.

V. LINCOLN'S LOST GRANDMOTHER

We have discovered one grandmother for Abraham Lincoln and we now have occasion to find another. We are to find the daughter whom Joseph Hanks sorrowfully omitted from his will, Lucy Hanks, the mother of Nancy, the mother of the President.

It is a long story and it has cost great labor, but this is the result:

Joseph Hanks had eight children whom he named in his will, and in addition had one daughter, Lucy, presumably the oldest, whom he disinherited. Of her waywardness after the removal of the family to Kentucky, we have altogether convincing proof; and of her waywardness in Virginia the proof is the birth of Nancy.

If this were all, it would be a pitiful story. But it is not all. A good man had faith in Lucy Hanks. Henry Sparrow was born in Mecklenburg County, Virginia, October 9, 1765, and was a soldier in the Revolutionary War. In his later years he drew a pension, and his date and place of birth and his military service are of record. He migrated to Kentucky with his parents, James Wright Sparrow and Mary Sparrow. His father died May 18, 1789, and his nuncupative will named Henry as his eldest son. Henry assumed the oversight of his younger brothers and his sister and the care of his mother. He also made love to Lucy Hanks, and on April 26, 1790, a license was issued for their marriage. A period of probation followed, and Lucy proved true. Almost a year later they were married, April 3, 1791, by John Bailey, a well known Baptist preacher.

Lucy Hanks was a young woman of no little force of character. Her father, brothers and husband could not write, but she wrote a bold hand with a flourish.

The two families of Sparrow and Hanks apparently had very little to do with each other until the death of Joseph Hanks, the offended father, but after his death they came together, and, on October 17, 1798, Thomas Sparrow, brother

of Henry, was licensed to marry Elizabeth Hanks, sister of Lucy. This worthy couple had no children of their own. But they took as their own, Nancy, the little daughter of Lucy, and Dennis, the illegitimate son of their sister Nancy, the aunt of the President's mother, and brought them up as their own. This couple, the only parents whom the President's mother ever knew, and by whose name she was called more frequently than by her own, removed to Indiana to be near her, died of the same disease which carried her away, and are buried beside her within the inclosure at Lincoln City. Fiction writers of the past twenty-five years, posing as sober historians, tell us of Nancy Hanks's adoption by her "kind Uncle Richard Berry" and her "dear Aunt Lucy Berry." But the real people who adopted her are buried with her in Indiana. They were a humble couple, but they did their duty faithfully by the mother of President Lincoln. They gave her better educational advantages than they themselves had enjoyed, and brought her up virtuously and religiously. Some modest stone ought to designate their graves, and the graves of the other uncle and aunt, Levi and Nancy Hanks Hall, who lie with her in the beautiful little park in Spencer County.

As for Lucy, the girl with the wayward youth, she lived well, after her marriage, as for a year before it. She became the mother of eight additional children, and her descendants constitute the largest group of living blood relations of Abraham Lincoln now alive. They are honest, God-fearing people to this day, for they have been true to her teaching. Her eight children she brought up well, and two of her sons became ministers of the Gospel.

The misinformation so diligently broadcast in the past twenty-five years has had this effect, among others, that the people of Indiana would not have known how to mark the four other graves in the inclosure with that of Nancy Hanks Lincoln at Lincoln City. That group of five graves was identified on the testimony of Dennis Hanks, who, although he could lie a little when he deemed it necessary, was not as a liar in the same class with most of his detractors. Mr. Jesse W. Weik, in his recent book, "The Real Lincoln," tells the truth about those five graves, and should help to clear the confusion of much that has been written about Nancy Hanks and her relations. It would be historically accurate, and in every way

fitting, that the State of Indiana should place small stones at the head of the other graves, or affix bronze markers to the railing, informing visitors to the park at Lincoln City that within the inclosure surrounding the grave of Nancy Hanks Lincoln are the bodies of her two aunts and their husbands, Levi and Nancy Hanks Hall, and Thomas and Elizabeth Sparrow, the latter couple her foster parents, who were faithful to her, even unto death.

Indiana Historical Collections

GOVERNORS' MESSAGES AND LETTERS

Edited by Logan Esarey

Already published.

Harrison's Messages and Letters, Two Volumes, 1922.

\$1.50 per volume.

Messages and Papers of Jennings, Boon, Hendricks, 1924.

\$1.50.

In Preparation

Messages and Papers of William B. Ray.

Published by the Indiana Historical Commission, Room 334,
State House, Indianapolis, Indiana.

The Indiana Historical Society, through the courtesy of one of its members, Mr. J. Edgar Burton of Indianapolis, General Manager of the Atlantic-Pacific Wonderland Way, has been presented with copies of "Hoosier Tours on the Atlantic-Pacific and Wonderland Way" for distribution in the society. This publication is a large, 34-page pamphlet, profusely illustrated, and containing a folded map of the two highways, together with ample automobile directions. Many notes are given about historic places and notable scenery. This is the first publication of its type in the United States and has many original features. Members of the society will be especially interested in the way in which the history and the scenery of Southern Indiana are presented to the motorist. Any member may secure a copy without expense by sending his address to the secretary, C. B. Coleman, State House, Indianapolis.